

Parting Shot 1

Like many of my underwater photographer buddies, I too love shooting gorgeous wide-angle scenes and meeting the challenge of balancing natural light with the artificial light introduced by my strobes.

Something I've never really given much time to as an alternative to powerful strobes on long arms while shooting wide-angle, is the use of filters. I've actually had a GreenWater Magic Filter for a number of years but can count on one hand the number of times I've actually taken it out of its little plastic sleeve.

On a recent boat dive hosted by this magazine's esteemed editor himself, I thought I would take the opportunity to quiz Peter's unsurpassed knowledge about how to get the best out of filter photography in the UK.

The first dive was a fairly straight-forward affair and precisely the conditions that the Magic-Filter works best in; 20m down with 8m or more vis the filter injected colour where the eye could

see none. All good so far and no surprises, the filter was doing exactly the job it was designed to do.

On the second dive of the day I decided to mix things up a bit and remove the filter, but still use natural light and make custom white-balance settings. The conditions underwater were very different; only 12m deep but with about 3m vis and plenty of sediment in the water but lots of ambient light. It would have been hard work to get any reasonably 'clean' images in these conditions if I was using strobes, but happily sticking with the 'natural light & CWB' combo I didn't have to worry about that.

Using my Olympus O-MD EM-1's rear screen to compose my shots & get instant feedback on my custom white-balance I noticed something quite unexpected. The camera could see further though the murky water more than I could! The parting-shot on this page demonstrates



Olympus OM-D EM-1, Panasonic 8mm fisheye, natural light, 1/50th, f/5.6, iso640

this effect perfectly; with my unaided eye I could not see the fish swimming between the upright pillars, and I certainly couldn't see the pillars at the rear of the structure either! Wow, this is the perfect tool for low-vis shooting! I even did a double-take when I realised this was happening and spent the rest of the dive marvelling at what I could see through my EVF.

Spurred on by these results I have since been shooting stills and video of a Spider Crab aggregation with natural light, CWB and the GWM too. The constant motion of the 5000+ crabs keeps the vis down to only

2m, but I was very pleased with the results and will now definitely consider natural light & filter photography as an alternative to struggling with strobes in the rich, but often less than crystal-clear, waters of the UK.

Parting Shot 2

I was nearing the end of an 80 minute dive around a shipping terminal at Negros in the Philippines.

This was an exploratory dive to enable the dive centre to expand its macro sites in more sheltered regions.

My normal procedure as I swim back to the boat is to start packing the strobe arms into a more accessible bundle for the deckhands to handle.

I had just clipped it all together when I noticed a Lizardfish with its mouth wide open. Then I saw the crab stuck in its mouth. Expecting the fish to take off I didn't rush to unpack the camera rig and the fish seemed to just freeze in place. A couple of shots later it was gone still chewing on its prey.

The moral of this story is to keep your camera rig intact until you reach the boat. I was lucky this time, but maybe not next...who knows?



Grey-streak Lizardfish with freshly caught crab., Negros Island, Philippines
Nikon D800 – 60mm f2.8 – 1/125, f22, ISO 100. Nauticam D800 housing

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